(b) If so, the names of those journalists ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH) : (a) and (b) 'Housing' is a State subject and all States/UTs are free to formulate and implement all social housing schemes keeeping in view their local needs and plan priorities. The Central Govt. has therefore no information in this regard.

Production of steel in the Country

3243. SHRI SURESH KALMADI : Will the MINISTER of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the cost of production of steel in India is the highest amongst the major steel producing countries ;

(b) if so, the reasons for the same; and

(c) the details of the steps being taken or proposed to reduce the cost ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR) : (a) and (b) As no authentic information on the cost of production of steel in other countries is available, it is not possible to compare the cost of production in those countries with that in India.

(c) Efforts to contain cost of production include ;

(i) increasing the utilization of installed capacity ;

(ii) improving productivity ;

(iii) energy conservation measures ;

(iv) improving maintenance ;

(v) timely modernization and balancing investments.

Assistance for development of backward areas in Maharashtra

3244. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Maharashtra have requested for assistance for the development of backward areas of Gadchiroli district and selected areas of Chandrapur district which are mainly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes and Primitive tribes; and

(b) if so, what action Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WELFARE (DR. RAJENDRA KUMARI BAJPAI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, the State Government has proposed an investment of Rs. 195·34 crores phased over a period of four years, under the on going schemes in different sector of development such as Roads Rural Electrification, Public Health, Agriculture and Irrigation etc. in the backward areas of Gadchiroli district and parts of Chandrapur district. The State Government has been advised that they should approach the planning Commission for enhanced allocation of funds during Eighth Plan under these sectors in view of the increased investments specially proposed for these areas.